

§ 7.24

such time as the Commission has determined whether there is reasonable cause to believe a violation has occurred.

(ii) The Ethics Officer shall notify the Director of the Office of Government Ethics and the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice of the Commission's finding that the complaint has merit. The notification shall contain a copy of the complaint, any materials submitted by the former employee, the Ethics Officer's report, and the certification of the Commission's action.

(iii) The Commission will coordinate any investigation or administrative action with the Department of Justice to avoid prejudicing criminal proceedings, unless the Department of Justice notifies the Commission that it does not intend to initiate criminal proceedings.

(3) If the Commission finds the complaint to be unfounded, no investigation will be conducted and both the complainant and the former employee will be notified by the Ethics Officer of the Commission's finding.

§ 7.24 Conduct of preliminary investigation.

(a) *Ethics Officer's responsibility.* Upon a finding under 11 CFR 7.23(b)(2) that a complaint appears to be substantiated, the Ethics Officer shall conduct an investigation into the allegations of the complaint.

(b) *Opportunity to respond.* The former employee will be sent a copy of the Ethics Officer's report and will be given an opportunity to respond in writing and under oath to the allegations made in the complaint and the findings made in the report. The former employee may provide any written legal or factual materials he or she believes demonstrate that no violation has occurred. Such response must be received by the Commission within 20 days after the former employee's receipt of the Ethics Officer's report, unless an extension is authorized in writing by the Ethics Officer.

(c) *Representation by counsel.* The former employee may be represented by counsel during the investigation. Such counsel shall notify the Ethics Officer in writing that he or she is representing the former employee. There-

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after, all communications between the Commission staff and the former employee relating to the investigation shall be made to the former employee's counsel.

(d) *Report to the Commission.* Upon completion of the investigation, the Ethics Officer shall prepare a report to the Commission, including any materials provided by the former employee. The report shall recommend whether there is reasonable cause to believe the respondent has violated 18 U.S.C. 207 (a), (b), or (c).

§ 7.25 Initiation of administrative disciplinary proceeding.

(a) *Commission review of report.* The Commission shall review the Ethics Officer's investigative report in Executive Session.

(b) *Reasonable cause to believe finding.* If the Commission, by an affirmative vote of four members, determines there is reasonable cause to believe a violation has occurred, it shall initiate an administrative disciplinary proceeding by providing the former employee with the notice defined in 11 CFR 7.26.

(c) *No reasonable cause to believe finding.* If the Commission determines that there is no reasonable cause to believe a violation has occurred, it will close its file on the matter and take no further action. The Commission shall notify the Director of the Office of Government Ethics, the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice, the complainant, and the former employee of its determination. Included in this notification will be a statement of reasons for the Commission's determination.

§ 7.26 Notice to former employee.

(a) *Notice requirement.* After a reasonable cause to believe finding the Ethics Officer shall provide the former Commission employee with adequate notice of an intention to institute a disciplinary proceeding and an opportunity to request a hearing.

(b) *Contents.* The notice required under this section shall contain:

(1) A statement of the allegations (and the basis thereof);

(2) Notification of the right to request a hearing;